

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 (ISO) R

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APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY
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PM - MR. VEST (SUBS)
S/S J.HOGANSON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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NODIS
FOR AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:MARR, MASS, SA

SUBJECT: SIDEWINDERS FOR SAUDI ARABIA

1. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE PENDING FOR FORMAL SUBMISSION FOR SECTION 36(B) CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW, A LETTER OF OFFER FOR 2,000 SIDEWINDER MISSILES FOR SAUDI ARABIA. THIS ISSUE HAS BECOME A HIGHLY CONTENTIOUS ITEM WITHIN AND WITHOUT CONGRESS.

2. BY WAY OF BRIEF BACKGROUND WHICH YOU MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE, WE SOLD THE SAUDIS 300 SIDEWINDERS IN 1974 TO SUPPORT THEIR ORIGINAL F-5 PURCHASES. A TOTAL OF 100 HAS BEEN DELIVERED AND 200 REMAIN ON ORDER. IN OCTOBER 1975, THE SAUDIS SUBMITTED AN ADDITIONAL REQUEST WHICH INCLUDED WAR RESERVE INVENTORY AND REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAINING THROUGH 1981 WHICH TOTALLED 4,468. TO RESPOND TO THE SAUDI REQUEST, DOD PERFORMED AN ANALYSIS BASED ON SAME THREAT AS THE

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1974 DOD SURVEY OF SAUDI ARMED FORCES OF TWO FRONT ENGAGE-

MENT INVOLVING A SMALL AND A LARGE STATE NEIGHBORING SAUDI ARABIA. DOD PROJECTED A SCENARIO OF A SIMULTANEOUS ATTACK OF PDRY AND IRAQ. STUDY CONCLUDED SAUDIS WOULD NEED FOR WAR RESERVE, TRAINING, AND 10 PERCENT MAINTENANCE FLOAT 2,400 MISSILES. SAUDIS ACCEPTED METHODOLOGY USED, WHICH IS SAME USED BY USAF TO DETERMINE U.S. REQUIREMENTS, AND

AMENDED THEIR REQUEST TO 2,000 AT COST OF DOLLARS 57 MILLION. DELIVERY WOULD BEGIN LATE IN 1978 AND CONTINUE UNTIL EARLY 1980.

3. INITIAL 20-DAY ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF 2,000 SIDE-WINDERS WAS SENT TO CONGRESS ON JUNE 9. FORMAL 30-DAY NOTIFICATION, WHICH SHOULD HAVE COME AFTER JUNE 29 WAS DELAYED BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL RECESS. OUR INTENTION WAS TO SUBMIT FORMAL NOTIFICATION AFTER CONGRESS BACK IN SESSION. MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, DETAILS OF CLASSIFIED BRIEFINGS WHICH WAS GIVEN TO CONGRESS DURING ADVANCE NOTIFICATION PERIOD LEAKED. WE HAVE BEEN WARNED TO EXPECT RESOLUTIONS AGAINST THE SALE TO BE TABLED IN SENATE BY SENATORS RIBICOFF, STONE AND CASE AND BY CONGRESSMAN ROSENTHAL IN HOUSE IF ADMINISTRATION FORMALLY SUBMITS SALE FOR CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW.

4. PRESS HAS BEEN GIVING INCREASING ATTENTION TO ISSUE. TODAY'S ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORT WRITTEN BY KEN FREED INCORRECTLY ALLEGES THAT I HAVE ORDERED A RE-EVALUATION OF SALE OF SIDEWINDERS AND THAT I HAVE CHANGED MY MIND AFTER SOME MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE SAID THEY WOULD FIGHT THE ARRANGEMENT. MEDIA HAS ALSO PLAYED UP DANGER THAT SAUDIS COULD TRANSFER SOME OF SIDEWINDERS TO OTHER ARAB NATIONS.

5. WE HAVE BEEN KEEPING SAUDI EMBASSY INFORMED IN GENERAL TERMS STATUS OF REQUEST BUT, PARTICULARLY SINCE AMBASSADOR ALIREZA IS NOT HERE, BELIEVE YOU SHOULD NOW GO TO SAUDIS AT LEVEL YOU DEEM MOST APPROPRIATE AND REVIEW THE SIDE-WINDER SALE MAKING THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

--THERE ARE ELEMENTS IN CONGRESS AND ON THE OUTSIDE THAT
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WANT TO MAKE TROUBLE. THERE IS ALSO A GROWING ANTI-ARMS SALE SENTIMENT IN CONGRESS.

--CONGRESSIONAL OBJECTION HAS NOT CENTERED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SALE BUT ON NUMBER REPEAT NUMBER OF MISSILES, WHICH SOME ARE ARGUING IS EXCESSIVE.

--HOWEVER, SINCE THIS IS A PERIOD JUST BEFORE ELECTIONS,

I AM CONCERNED THAT SIDEWINDERS SALE MAY BECOME A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE WHICH WILL STIMULATE A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC AGITATION WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL NEITHER TO OURSELVES NOR TO THE SAUDIS.

--IT IS NOT CORRECT, AS AP STORY ALLEGES, THAT WE ARE RE-EVALUATING THIS SALE, WHICH WE NEGOTIATED IN GOOD FAITH

IN SPIRIT OF THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US. WE HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF FULFILLING THE TRANSACTION. IN ORDER TO DO SO, THIS REQUIRES SUBMISSION OF LETTER OF OFFER FOR FORMAL THIRTY-DAY REVIEW BY CONGRESS, AND THE ONLY QUESTION IS ONE OF TIMING.

--TO AVOID THIS BECOMING A CONTENTIOUS PRE-ELECTORAL ISSUE, WHICH WOULD ONLY GIVE SOME ELEMENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEEK TO DAMAGE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONS, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO DEFER SUBMITTING THE REQUEST TO CONGRESS UNTIL AFTER NOVEMBER ELECTIONS. WE HAVE ALSO CONSIDERED AS AN ALTERNATIVE SUBMITTING PART OF THE REQUEST NOW AND THE BALANCE AT A LATER DATE, BUT ARE CONCERNED THAT CRITICS OF THIS SALE WOULD SEIZE ON THIS TO SEEK TO TIE OUR HANDS FOR THE FUTURE. BEFORE WE TAKE ANY ACTION IN THIS MATTER, WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING SAUDI VIEWS.
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